

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, August 4 1694.

Quest. 1. **Y**OU having in one of your former Papers given an Abstract of the First Volume of the French Book of Martyrs, or Edict of Nantz, I'm the better incouraged to ask you to give us one of the Second, which I am the more induced to desire, because I believe it might be of great benefit, as well as satisfaction to the Publick, to be better acquainted with the Persecutions of the Papists, which is pretty well discovered in these Books. I leave it, Gentlemen, to your judgment and Leisure, only desiring, if you think it proper, that we may one day have it.

Ans. In the first Abstract we gave an Account of the State of the Reformed until the Death of Henry IV. and that their Affairs at that time were in a very uncertain posture. It's true, the Edict of Nantz had sheltered them from open Persecution, but it could not defend them from the Craft and Secret Designs of the Clergy. They had already had so unhappy a proof of the implacable hatred of the Romish Church, that Prudence would not let them lay down all their Suspicions. They had hardly begun to breathe, and to enjoy a little of that quiet that the Edict of Nantz seemed to assure them of, but the Clergy laid snares for them, and at a distance prepared the means for their destruction. As they had left nothing unsaid that could put them out of King Henry IV. his Favour, who being of a very quick and suspicious Temper, and very jealous of his Grandeur, he was ready to catch at the least shadow of any thing that was offered him against them, but his Anger being chiefly an effect of the Ardour of his Temper, soon vanish'd; so that the Agreement was not yet well Established between the two Religions, nor was their hatred absolutely extinguish'd when the Minority of Lewis XIII. left those former Enmities the liberty of acting a new; whereas the Authority of Henry IV. had something restrain'd them. By this unforeseen accident the Reformed entered again into a very doubtful condition, and unexpectedly fell into those cruel uncertainties that never ended, but with their ruin.

After the Assassination of King Henry, whose affection the Reformed confided much in, they thought of uniting themselves more strictly, and took vigorous resolutions not to be oppressed by the Clergy, but they were so divided amongst themselves, that it broke their justest Measures. The jealousy of the great Lords, and their Complaisance for the Court often overturn'd those deliberations which were for the Publick good. In the first Political Assembly that was held at Samur, the Marshal de Bouillon aim'd very much at being President, and because it fell to M. De Pleffis by the plurality of Voices, he appeared very angry at it, and threatened to resent it. They took there an Oath to Unite, but without any prejudice to private interests, which each person tacitly reserv'd to himself. The Court, which was much displeased at this Confederation of the Reformed, industriously nourished all Seeds of Dissention: They made use of the Passion of the Malecontents, to weaken them, by dis-uniting them; and to make the Assembly Odious, they give out a Report amongst the people, That they intended to take up Arms at the least Refusal, and that they maintained a Correspondence with Strangers, who were to assist them if they had occasion for them. These and other things cause great Distrusts amongst the Catholicks, who were displeased to think the Engagements of the Confederation, should rise so high as to resist the Will of the Court. The Queen Regent managed all these Circumstances with so much Artifice, that the Assembly of Samur, which was composed of the most Eminent amongst the Reformed, were constrained to obey an Order for their separating, without concluding any thing. All passed in Intrigues of this Nature, un-

til the Majority of Lewis XIII. when the States of the Kingdom assembled together. The King's Authority being questioned, and what had happened to the Two Precedent Kings upon this Account, made them think of securing the Person of the King against the Enterprises of the Court of Rome: They accused it of having encouraged Assassinations by its false Maxims; and they designed to make it pass into a Fundamental Law of State, that Kings were independent of all Humane Power, and that no Authority upon Earth should be able to declare the Crown forfeited, nor give the Subjects a Dispensation from their Oath of Fidelity. The Reformed and most Judicious who had felt the unhappy influences of the Power of the Romish Court, highly maintain'd this Proposition. On the other side the Cardinal du Perron harranged the Clergy, and made a studied Speech to persuade them to submit the Crown to the discretion of the Pope. He omitted not the common argument to prejudice his Auditors against the opposite Doctrine, that it was the effect of Calvinism, and a Proposition suggested by the Hereticks. And what was most surprizing, is, that the Court declared for the Clergy, and favoured a Doctrine so contrary to the Jealousy of the Sovereignty, and which put the King under the danger of loosing the Crown, under the pretence of an Anathema. They believed that on this occasion the Queen would Sacrifice the Interest of the King, her Son, to her own Conduct, with the Pope and Spaniards, whom she would manage. Tho at other times she was very far from condemning the opinion of Absolute Obedience in the Reformed, and forgot nothing that might confirm them in these Maxims; insinuating that the Gospel permitted Subjects only to sigh and bear patiently any supposed wrongs, and that Christianity suggested none but Submission and peaceable sentiments. The Court, to persuade some of their Ministers to Preach up this pacific Divinity, pretended 'twould be for the good of the Party, and that thereby they might quell this Spirit of Rebellion which their Zeal called Courage and Vigour, because otherwise the King would find himself forc'd to humble them, that he might put himself out of the danger of fearing any thing from their ill humour. The Author shews this was a snare laid to catch the simple, and that it has been the general craft of those that would reduce the People to servitude, to make it their duty to suffer all, and to permit 'em selves to be oppressed without Murmuring or Resistance. That the Catholicks made use of these specious Maxims only to abuse them, and to prevent the foresight of the Reformed, and taught these Lessons of the Gospel, that they might the more easily be able to despoil them of their Priviledges, without running any risk; and at the same time they endeavour'd their ruin, they fraudulently persuaded them, that a good Conscience required them to endure all, and to renounce the Natural Right of their Preservation. But in such a Case as this reason ought to be consulted, and if we cannot go back to the Foundation of Governments to represent their Original Constitution, we may conclude that mutual Preservation was the Universal Motive. And if it happened that the strongest seized the Command, and brought the People under a Yoke, it was an Usurped Power, and as Violence carries with it a Nullity of what soever Articles it requires; so Men are obliged to Servitude no longer than they are Constrained to it. Consequently to form a strong Government, it is requisite that common safety should be the base and foundation of it; without this reciprocal Relation which unites all the Members of the Society, and makes them grace to their Mutual Defence, it is impossible but have

it should soon be dismembred and destroyed. It is repugnant to Humane Reason, that whole Societies should engage themselves without restriction, and that after having thus joyned themselves together, they should trust their destiny to the chance of becoming a Prey to the Caprices and Passions of a Prince, that they have imprudently placed above their Laws.

They objected further that this Maxim that made the People Judges of the breach of Laws, was very pernicious, and gave a pretence to them of disturbing the State, and fomenting Factions. To which the Author Answers, *Truths are not less so, because of the inconveniencies which may attend them.*

The Cheats and Tricks that the Court Parties had used to regain what Priviledges they had any way given to the Reformed, had so vexed and discouraged them, that they easily gave ear to any thing that could mortify and humble the Catholick Party. And whilst they had these Repentments, they entered into a Treaty with the Prince of Conde, who had taken Arms to Reform the Conduct of those who pretended to govern under the Kings Name, and had abused that Power to the prejudice of the Crown. This Prince made use of them according to the Genius of some great Lords who joyn their lives to their Inferiours, only to command them, without thinking themselves obliged to any thing. This Army being enlarged by their joyning with them, frightened the Queen, and finding himself strong enough to make them grant him honourable Conditions, he forgot his engagements; he so bluntly concluded the Peace, and slightly past over the difficulties that had United the Reformed to him, that it lookt as if they had consulted him only for a form; but tho the Reformed got nothing, yet they lost by it; for these Proceedings were made use of to redouble the aversion of the People; and the King who was so excessively jealous of his Authority, that he had no power to command himself, easily received the Impression they gave him, That the Reformed were inclined to begin a War. Thus the King's Hatred being stirred up by the apprehensions that they had inspired him with, he declared it in a very bloody manner, when he went to subdue *Bearn*, which was not yet re-united to the Crown. The Reformed, whom he met with upon his way, suffered a thousand Indignities and Insults; he abandoned them to the Insolency of the Soldiers, and left them to the People, whose Fury was called Zeal by their Preachers. The Reformed did not foresee this Outrage, and suffered themselves to be thus ravaged, without Opposition. They pretend that they had taken false Measures, in not obeying, or resisting only by the halves. 'Tis true, many amongst them had so great an aversion to taking Arms, that they chose rather to submit to the Will of the Court, to show that they acted with very great Confidence, than to be continually harried with the noise and fears of War.

Nothing was more certain than that the Catholics intended the intire Ruine of the Reformed, and that they employed them with the thoughts of a Peace, only that they might be the better able to hide the Design they had formed against them, and execute them with the less danger. The Pope powerfully solicited the King, and the Clergy ardently sighed for it. The Spaniards forgot nothing that could perswade France to weaken it self; and, according to their double-sighted Policy, they lessened the Interest of the Kingdom, under a pretence of abolishing Heresie. 'Twas determin'd, the Reformed must be brought under. The Council was only divided about the Execution of it. The wisest of 'em, who was displeased at the thoughts of re-kindling a Flame in the midst of the Kingdom, maintained, That at least, if they would chastise, and humble the most mutinous amongst them, they ought to spare those that were peaceable, and permit 'em to live under the shelter of the Edicts. But the Priests, who had always the least Compassion, insisted upon their utter Extirpation.

We should proceed to the end of the Book, but that our Paper will not permit it; and therefore we must leave the rest till another time; and after we have satis-

fied some other of our Urgent Querists, we shall finish what this little Compass would not here allow.

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